FREEDOM WATCH

Citizens Project

This is a Paid Insert

SAVE THESE DATES

August 18th

Diversity Festival
Everybody Welcome
cosdiversityforum.org

October 13th

Meet the Candidates Series Town Hall Meeting with Rep. Mark Udall

The End of Abstinence-only Sex–ed?

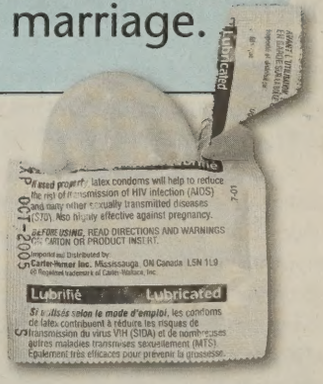
By Ben Landsman

Starting this fall, sex education in Colorado classrooms must include a comprehensive science-based curriculum, including the use of contraceptives and end the practice of abstinence-only curriculums. On July 1st, House Bill 1292 went into effect, updating the requirements for sex education taught in public schools. The debate over sex education in schools is truly a battle for the separation of church and state, and HB 1292 is an important policy for keeping religion removed from public schools. Abstinence-only programs use religious doctrines as guidelines for appropriate sexual behavior, therefore the use of government dollars to fund these programs threatens religious freedom.

The current era of abstinence-only education began in 1981, when Congress enacted the Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) designating funds for promoting abstinence. According to Advocates for Youth, to be eligible for AFLA funds, programs were required to teach only abstinence and could only mention contraception to emphasize its failure rate. Under the act, millions of dollars in government funds flowed to conservative Christian organizations to teach sex education in schools. In the case *Kendrick v. Sullivan,* the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged the constitutionality of the law, saying it is a violation of separation of church and state. Although the Supreme Court ruled against the ACLU, stating that the law itself did not violate separation of church and state, the court did send the case back to the lower courts to review whether the administration of the act violated the separation of church and state. Eventually, in 1993 the Department of Health and Human Services issued guidelines for federal grants under the AFLA. These guidelines included evaluating the program to guard against religious messages and ensure medical accuracy.

Current funding for abstinence-only sex education can be traced to 1996, when Congress attached a provision to landmark welfare reform legislation that explicitly designated funds for abstinence-only sex education. This provision has allowed the Bush Administration to designate millions for promoting abstinence and the beliefs of religious conservatives. Bush included $242 million for abstinence-only education in his 2008 budget proposal. If passed, this will bring the total dollars spent on promoting

88% of teens who take virginity pledges will have sex before marriage.



Continued on page 2

Citizens Project
P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Colo. Spgs., CO
Permit No. 463

IN THIS ISSUE

› **Affirmative Action: Unfair Preferences or Equal Opportunity**
Page 3

› **Open letter from the Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center**
Page 4

The End of Abstinence-only Sex–ed? Continued from page 1

Continued from page 1

abstinence during the Bush Presidency to $1.45 billion.

Further, the legitimacy of abstinence-only programs has come under scrutiny. The latest CDC data shows that teens are having sex. According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 47% percent of high schools have had sex and in the latest research conducted by the Center for Disease Control's National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 88% of teens who take virginity pledges will have sex before marriage. In Colorado, approximately 12,130 girls under the age of 18 will become pregnant in the next year. Studies show the most effective way of protecting young people from sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy is through comprehensive science-based sex education, not abstinence-only programs.

A 2004 congressional research study found that 11 out of 13 of the most commonly used abstinence-only curricula contained "medically inaccurate or misleading information, often in direct contradiction to the findings of government scientists." Examples include statements that half of homosexual American teenagers are HIV positive, condoms fail to prevent HIV transmission 31% of the time, and women who have abortions become sterile 10% of the time and are more likely to commit suicide. This data is directly refuted by scientific consensus, yet is part of the sex education curriculum in many public schools. Additionally, a study released in April by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a nonpartisan research group, concluded that abstinence-only sex education programs have zero effect on teens' sexual habits.

As a result of such findings, legislatures are beginning to question the validity of the programs. Along with Colorado's HB 1292, Iowa and Washington State also passed laws ending or limiting abstinence-only sex education. In Colorado Springs, schools must be in compliance with the new law when the school year begins this fall.

Colorado Springs District 11, the areas largest school district, already follows the "abstinence plus" approach mandated in HB 1292; abstinence is taught as the primary means for protecting against sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, but the use of contraceptives is also taught. Under its current sex education program, District 11 keeps a list of approved community organizations that may be invited to teach sex education. Each school's principal must approve the visit and a teacher is in the classroom monitoring the program. However, under this system, District 11 sex education curricula have little consistency, and controversy has developed around which community groups should be permitted to teach.

In the winter of 2004 conservative Christian groups marched in front of Palmer High School with pictures of aborted fetuses to protest Planned Parenthood teaching sex education. Then-school board member Eric Christen led the charge to ban Planned Parenthood from District 11 schools. While the ban failed and Planned Parenthood remains on the list of approved community education groups, the incident led administrators to refrain from inviting Planned Parenthood into the school. As a result of the events at Palmer, Mitchell High School also cancelled Planned Parenthood presentations. Mitchell Principal Jerry Anderson said

> ...abstinence-only sex education programs have zero effect on teens' sexual habits.

"If we were to bring them (Planned Parenthood) in, that would put our kids right in the middle of it (politics)."

Local observers have raised concerns regarding the group Life Network and their sex education branch, Education for a Lifetime, teaching sex education in Colorado Springs schools. Education for a Lifetime teaches an abstinence-only curriculum and has a religious mission, which states, "Life Network is a sanctity of human life ministry that impacts and transforms people with the love of Christ." According to Education for a Lifetime's website, the group has been working in the Colorado Springs schools for 14 years.

Before classes resume in the fall, Colorado Springs educators will have to examine their sex education curricula for compliance with HB 1292. While there is value in bringing in community organizations to teach sex education, this system may inherently lead to charges of bias and unaccountability. One possible solution is to have the teachers teach sex education. Students respect teachers and see teachers as voices of authority. Schools do not contract out the duties of teaching algebra, chemistry, or English to community groups. Instead these subjects must follow strict curricula outlined in school policies. Sex education should be no different. Separation of church and state must be respected and Colorado Springs schools must base their sex education curriculum on the most scientifically and medically sound practices, which will provide teens with the best information for making healthy choices.

In a state where religious doctrine has influenced the passage of laws dealing with nondiscrimination and gay marriage, the passage of HB 1292 represents an important step forward for rational, non-biased public policy. While HB 1292 is a state law and does not affect federal abstinence-only programs, it will help ensure Colorado's students receive medically accurate sex education free from religious bias. Separation of church and state is critical to a healthy democracy and a vibrant community which respects all views, ideas and religious perspectives. Colorado Springs schools must examine the latest research demonstrating the most effective methods for teaching sex education and keep religion out of the public schools.

Affirmative Action: Unfair Preferences or Equal Opportunity?

The anti-Affirmative Action crusade of California businessman Ward Connerly has come to Colorado. With his backing, a group called the "Civil Rights Initiative" is proposing a constitutional amendment for the November 2008 ballot that would outlaw Affirmative Action in public higher education, government contracting and public employment in Colorado. Since Affirmative Action is one of the most important victories of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, this effort seems bound to confuse. To help local voters understand what the fuss is all about, Citizens Project brings you this primer on Affirmative Action. It is reprinted from the original by Colorado Unity, a state-wide coalition promoting equal opportunity for all Coloradans, of which Citizens Project is a member.

What is Affirmative Action? Affirmative action is a *modest* tool to provide *qualified* individuals with equal access to opportunities in education, business and employment. Affirmative action initiatives, including recruitment, outreach, and training efforts, have played a critical role in providing women and minorities with access to educational and professional opportunities they would otherwise have been denied despite their strong qualifications.

Why do we need it? Despite the progress that has been made over the last 30 years, ensuring equal opportunity for women and people of color remains an elusive goal - in part because they continue to face discrimination. Women and minorities remain underutilized in many fields, still receive unequal pay and continue to encounter a "concrete wall" which blocks their advancement to the highest levels in corporate America.

Affirmative Action Means...

- Working toward achieving Equal Opportunity
- Providing outreach and recruitment programs to ensure diversity in classrooms, campuses and workplaces.
- Acknowledging that there are still barriers and challenges for achieving success, for even the most qualified candidates to jobs, for higher education, and in obtaining contracts. Affirmative action cannot alone *remove* these unfair barriers and challenges, but it is one tool to help assure that *qualified* women and minorities facing these barriers are afforded a fair chance in classrooms, on campuses and workplaces.

Affirmative Action Myths

Myth: Affirmative action is about preferential treatment.

Reality: Affirmative action is about equal opportunity, not preferential treatment. It's about working toward a more level playing field so that those *qualified individuals* who face barriers – those that unfairly exclude women and people of color from classrooms, campuses and jobsites – are given a fair chance to succeed.

Example barriers: Some of the deepest barriers stem from segregated communities; under-resourced schools; and job sites that are not inclusive or representative of diverse work forces because they have a history of giving opportunity to the same old boy's networks. It is a fact that 80% of jobs are filled by word of mouth. Other barriers include things like standardized testing, college "legacies" for alumni.

Myth: The need for affirmative action is not as great as it was in the 1950s and 1960s. We don't need Affirmative Action anymore. We don't have any racism or sexism now. That's in the past.

Reality: It may be a lot less obvious now, but inequalities and even discrimination still exists today. The statistics are very telling – in earnings, in access to higher education, in participation in board rooms and upper management.

- Earnings: Women make 77 percent of what men do.
- Access to higher education: Only 39.7 percent of African –American high school graduates attended college between 1998 and 2000 – compared to 45.6 percent of white high school graduates.
- Board rooms and upper management: Women and minorities make up 57 percent of Fortune 2000 workforce, but hold 5 percent of the senior management jobs.

Myth: Affirmative action gives unqualified people unfair opportunities to get into schools and to obtain jobs and contracts.

Reality: Affirmative Action gives those who face barriers in getting equal opportunities a chance to hear about jobs, contracts and areas of higher education. If it weren't for affirmative action, in some cases the most qualified individuals who face barriers and are thereby unfairly excluded would not even have a chance to prove their qualifications and apply for these jobs and slots in higher education. This includes white women.

For instance, it's a fact that although women have higher college grades than men, they score 38 points lower on the GMAT. Women who graduate from Business School have, on average, grades equivalent to those of men. Independent research indicates that the GMAT over-predicts the performance of men and under-predicts that of women. Would you say that a woman with a GMAT score 38 points lower than a man's wasn't qualified?

Myth: Dr. Martin Luther King wanted us to be colorblind and not have race-based laws.

Reality: Actually, Dr. King's dream was about EQUALITY not blindness to inequality.

Dr. King himself, as chair of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, initiated a highly successful affirmative action campaign: "Operation Breadbasket" so that a more colorblind society could be realized and the "content of peoples' character" could be stressed over skin color.

Myth: But affirmative action is just not fair.

Reality: Affirmative action is all about access to opportunity and thereby achieving fairness. In our society we have developed "short cuts" to evaluate whether someone is qualified for school or a job. Some of those "short cuts" unfairly exclude qualified women and minorities. Affirmative action attempts to level the playing field that those short cuts have knocked off balance.

Content provided by Colorado Unity. For more information about Colorado Unity, please contact Dolores Atencio, Project Director, at DoloresAtencio@msn.com or Dennis Apuan, Southern Colorado Organizer, at dapuan@coloradounity.com or call (719) 634-1525.

An Open Letter from the Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center

Dear Friends, Colleagues, Community Members and Supporters:

In 1992, organizations in Colorado Springs worked to pass a Constitutional Amendment designed to prevent Colorado's nondiscrimination policies from ever recognizing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Fifteen years later, the laws they sought to prevent are nearly fully in place. On August 3, 2007, Senate Bill 25, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in matters of employment, along with other important legislation, went into effect. Not only is this legislation crucial to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and families throughout Colorado—and especially in Colorado Springs—these laws are a true testament to the passion, dedication and years of hard work put forth by individuals and organizations in our community, and a tribute to the individuals, organizations and businesses that have supported our work throughout the years. Today is truly a day for celebration!

You can find information outlining the laws taking effect on August 3, 2007, including information about accessing resources should discrimination occur and information for employers, on our web site at **www.YourPrideCenter.org.** We would greatly appreciate your assistance in disseminating this information as widely as possible. If you have any questions, or if there is further information we can provide, please just let us know.

On behalf of all of us here at the Pride Center, thank you!

Ryan Acker

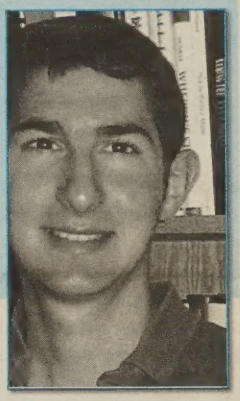
Executive Director
Pikes Peak Gay & Lesbian Community Center

New Executive Director

• Citizens Project is pleased to announce that Barb Ferrill Van Hoy has accepted the position of Executive Director. Barb brings over three years of experience at Citizens Project as Development Director, and over 12 years in the nonprofit and advocacy sector.

■ Barb Ferrill Van Hoy

• Ben Landsman joined our staff in June as Program Coordinator through Colorado College's Public Interest Fellow. Ben graduated from Colorado College in May with a B.A. in Political Science.



■ Ben Landsman

Be part of the solution.

"Citizens Project gives the public an opportunity to report injustice, to be listened to, and then to be part of the solution."

– Sharon Berthrong, CP board member

You can make a difference. JOIN CITIZENS PROJECT,
Your voice for tolerance in the Pikes Peak region.

❑ Yes, I'd like to support Citizens Project! Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $50 ❑ $75 ❑ $100 ❑ $250 ❑ Other: $_____

(All donors receive a postage-paid subscription to Freedom Watch.)

❑ Sign me up for the Activist Network email: _____

Name _____

Address _____
Street

_____
City State Zip

Phone (___)- _____ (___)- _____
Work Home

Please return to:
Citizens Project
Box 2085
Colo. Spgs., CO 80901

MISSION:

Citizens Project spotlights issues in the Pikes Peak region and mobilizes people to strengthen the traditional values of our nation: equal rights, individual freedoms, separation of church and state, civic engagement, and respect for diversity.

Citizens Project

P.O. Box 2085
Colorado Springs,
Colorado 80901
Phone: (719) 520-9899
Fax: (719) 520-0118
www.citizensproject.org
email: info@citizensproject.org

Board Members

Sharon Berthrong
JJ Courtright
David Dempsey
Susan Edmondson
Kailash Jaitly
Burl Kreps
Ann MacLaughlin
Kristy Milligan
Deb Muehleisen
Una Ng-Brasch
Cynthia Nimerichter
Pat Peterson
Radha Pyati, Chair
Julia Tanner
Greg Varner
Ron Walden

Advisory Council

Deb Adams
Jody Alyn
Peg Bacon
Buck Blessing
Richard Conway
Sharon Friedman
Peet Heuberger
Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins
Mary Mashburn
Mary Ellen McNally
Marcy Morrison
Joanne Peterson
James Sauls
Cat Scheibner
Jinn Alice Scott
Kimberly Sherwood
Richard Skorman
Marvin Strait
June Waller
Greg Walta
Mari Webster
MiRobin Webster

Editorial Committee

Christine Burns
Sharon Friedman
Joe Jenkins
Thomas McCullock
Kristy Milligan
Deb Muehleisen
Steve Schwartz
Richard Van Scotter
MiRobin Webster

Staff

Barb Van Hoy, Executive Director
Ben Landsman, Program Coordinator/PIFP

A member of Community Shares.
Freedom Watch is published 6 times a year in Colorado Springs.
©2007,Citizens Project. All rights reserved.

Freedom Watch appreciates the support of the: Gay & Lesbian Fund for Colorado